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AFGHANISTAN

CASE STUDY Youth Have Their Say

USAID gives Afghan youth a voice in their future through talk radio



Photo: Internews

23 year-old Fahim Sediqi, presenter of Internews Generation Hope youth program, speaks to youth callers live-to-air from across the provinces of Afghanistan from Badakshan to Paktya, and Mazar to Takhar, enabling young people to connect across the nation; sharing views, aspirations and issues relevant to the lives of all young Afghans.

CHALLENGE With 68 percent of the population below the age of 25, Afghanistan has a large and growing youth population, most of whom have grown up during decades marked by political instability and violent conflict, and face uncertain futures. Access to education has been inconsistent, and often completely absent for rural and remote communities. For girls and young women, education was prohibited altogether during the Taliban years. While change is emerging, with an increased number of schools being established and increased ratios of girls and young women in school, young people are still struggling to find a voice and their place in this emerging democratic nation. When they leave school, they face unemployment. In addition, traditionally young people are encouraged to defer to their elders in family or public matters, often leading to an absence of youth opinions in decision making processes. Young Afghans are often excluded from the role of building a safe and stable future for Afghanistan.

INITIATIVE With USAID support, “Generation Hope,” a new interactive radio program, was launched on the national radio service Salam Watandar in June 2011, opening up an opportunity for young people to people to engage in national dialogue. “Generation Hope” is a phone-in program broadcast on 43 partner radio stations across the nation giving young people the opportunity to share their opinions and ask questions of experts and decision makers. This show, the first of its kind in Afghanistan, provides a platform for national debate and dialogue between young people from different provinces and different ethnic groups.

RESULTS After just two weeks on the air, “Generation Hope” was reaching young people from all walks of life and provinces, with dozens of youth callers participating in the live phone-in program from Badakshan, Khost, Jalalabad, Mazar, Kunduz, Paktya, and Takhar. The callers, aged between 14 and 24, discussed topics such as drug addiction, participation of youth in politics, depression, body building, steroids, cricket, and music. “Generation Hope” is planning to expand its production team to include young people for six provincial partner radio stations.